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EARLY PRESBYTERIANISM IN TEXAS AS SEEN BY
REV. JAMES WESTON MILLER, D. D.

ROBERT FINNEY MILLER, M. D.

My father, the Rev. Dr. James Weston Miller, came to Texas in December, 1844, as a missionary of the Presbyterian church to the First Presbyterian Church of Houston. He arrived at Houston on the steamer *Captain Wood*, having come by boat down the Ohio from Steubenville, and down the Mississippi to New Orleans, then by water to Galveston and Harrisburg. He was born in Erie County, Pennsylvania, on French Creek, near Mill Village, November 15, 1815, the eldest of nine children of Jeremiah and Elizabeth Weston Miller, and was christened James Weston for his maternal grandfather, Esquire James Weston, a descendant of the Westons of Duxbury and Plymouth, Massachusetts. James Weston Miller's family were pioneers in north-western Pennsylvania. His grandfather, Stephen Miller, came early to Erie County and settled at Waterford.

James Weston Miller began his education in the old log school houses of Erie County, and studied night after night by the blaze of a pine knot. He later entered Waterford Academy, six miles away, and walked the distance to and fro for some years. In 1835 he finished the academy course and won a scholarship which gave him two years free at Jefferson College, Canonsburg, Pennsylvania. At the end of his sophomore year he was out of funds, so returned to Waterford Academy as principal during 1837-38. Returning to Jefferson in 1838 he graduated in 1840. There were forty-two graduates that year, and he took first honors and the valedictory September 14, 1840. For the next year he was assistant to Rev. Dr. Mathew Brown, President of Jefferson College. In the fall of 1841 he accepted the principalship of the Grove Academy at Steubenville, Ohio, for a year, and here began the lifelong friendship with Dr. C. C. Beatty, President of the Steubenville Female Seminary. Dr. Beatty was one of the greatest Presbyterian divines of his day. After a year at the Grove Academy, Miller entered the theological seminary at Allegheny, Pennsylvania, to prepare for the ministry. Here he graduated in

1844, was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Washington, and left the same year for Houston as a missionary. It had been arranged that Dr. Beatty should follow him and that they should devote their united lives to the upbuilding of Presbyterianism in the Republic of Texas. But Dr. Beatty remained at Steubenville and spent a life of great usefulness in the Female Seminary.

Rev. James Weston Miller was twenty-nine years of age when he arrived in Houston. His field of labor is thus described in his diary:

Monday, 30th December, 1844. I pen a few statistics for after reference respecting this prospective scene of my labors in the ministry. The Presbyterian Church has thirteen members; place much altered in regard to religion. People always ready to attend preaching, always attentive, respectful, polite, kind and confiding whenever met. Thick forests are in the neighborhood. The howling of the wolf is often heard. The Methodist and Episcopal Churches each number about thirty whites, and the Methodist Church about thirty colored members. The place looks old, houses generally unpainted and as if built in a hurry and soon to be left. In this respect, however, improving. Weeds seem to have overrun the whole town during the last summer. Business improving. Navigation to Galveston much impeded by northers and little water in the bayou. Weather very dry and rather cold usually. Am boarding at Dr. Cones.'

The young minister zealously took up his work. His diary says:

May 18, 1845. Preached both morning and evening. General Sam Houston, President of the Texas Republic, and wife attended both services. May the Lord come and take away his and others' madness.

"Left July 1, 1845, for the North; gone eight months and collected \$1344 for the church on this trip." His failing health is often bemoaned, but he adopted as his motto "Better wear out than rust out." While he was away collecting money to finish the church, Texas became a State. The church was finished in 1846, and they no longer were forced to use the Capitol for services. By March 21, 1847, the church had become self-supporting, and the young missionary was installed as pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Houston—the first installation in Texas. The

pastor needed an helpmeet, so, late in the summer, he went North to claim as his bride Elizabeth A. McKennan, an orphan, who lived with her grandfather, Galbraith Stewart, at West Middletown, Pennsylvania. She had graduated at Steubenville Seminary in 1844, and it was again the guiding hand of Dr. Beatty that sent the young minister to meet Elizabeth McKennan. After visiting her people and his, the young couple left by boat for Houston. They were received cordially, and the young bride, of great beauty of heart and person, aided her husband to build up Zion. In 1848 their first son came to bless the union, and was christened Thomas McCall for the mother's uncle.

Houston was not an healthful place, and the faithful pastor was often too sick to attend to his duties. He lost so much flesh that in 1850 his early death from consumption was presaged, and he was advised to try life in a higher climate. He went at once to Gay Hill, Washington County, finished the old Miller Home there of cedar logs, and became pastor of Prospect Church, the second one organized in Texas by the Rev. Hugh Wilson, in February, 1839. This neighborhood is now an historic one. It soon became a center of refinement and culture. There is no more beautiful pastoral scene in Texas than this old place. Situated on high ground, surrounded by aged live oak trees draped with beautiful moss, and with unsurpassed views in every direction, the appeal to an inborn love of nature was overwhelming to the young preacher. Sorrow came to him early, for his young wife died suddenly in their new home, leaving the father with an infant son of three days and a boy two years of age. This was a crushing blow, but the bereft husband looked upon it as the hand of God, and took up his burden single handed. The death of his first wife delayed the opening of Live Oak Female Seminary from 1850 to February, 1853, as shown by a letter written by Miller July 1, 1850, to his wife's aunt. Kind neighbors, the family of Rev. Hugh Wilson, who lived on an adjacent farm, and others cared for his two little ones while he went about preaching the gospel and drawing around him families of great worth. In 1852 he married the first cousin and chum of his first wife, Elizabeth Scott Stewart, from near Bethany College, Brooke County, West Virginia. Together in the old home, near Gay Hill, in 1853, they opened Live Oak Female Seminary, the first Presbyterian

female school in Texas. It was conducted for twenty-five years, till the death of Dr. Miller in 1888. Many of his first pupils came from his old church in Houston, among them Matilda Burke, the mother of Col. E. B. Cushing, President of the Board of Trustees of the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas, the Conklins and many others. Around the seminary, settled on farms, were makers of Texas history. The first three judges of the supreme court of Texas, Lipscomb, Wheeler, and Hemphill, were all patrons of the school. Lucy Lipscomb, Betty Lipscomb, Emily Wheeler, and Elizabeth Hemphill received their education there. Judge R. E. B. Baylor bought a farm across the road from the seminary, and there lived and died. He was a bachelor, but his nieces and grand nieces who lived with him studied at Live Oak Seminary. For Judge Baylor were named both Baylor University and Baylor Female College. These schools were then at Independence, five miles east, but in plain view from my father's home. Thither came also Judge Gillespie, his wife and daughter, Mary, and her husband, General John Sayles, author of Sayles' *Pleadings* and many other law books. The Sayles home still stands, and is occupied by the family of a son, Barry Gillespie Sayles, who married Emily Clarissa, youngest daughter of Rev. Dr. Miller. General Sayles, while living here, was preceptor of Judge T. J. Brown, late Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Texas.

Miss Rebecca K. Stewart, sister of Mrs. Miller, became the lady principal of the Seminary in 1853. In 1854, she married Dr. George C. Red, but continued as principal until 1875, when she went to Austin and opened Stuart Seminary. She was cultured, refined and a wonderful teacher. Her son, Dr. Samuel Clark Red of Houston, was the first Arts Graduate of the University of Texas. Dr. George C. Red's oldest sister was the mother of Hon. T. S. Henderson of Cameron, long a Regent of the University of Texas. Many other families, wealthy and distinguished, settled there. Mr. Thomas Affleck, who had a most wonderful house and library and more than one hundred slaves, Captain Chriesman, surveyor-general for Stephen F. Austin's colony, and grandfather of Messrs. Rector, Thaddeus and Oliver Thomson, of Austin. From Brenham came Louise and Annie Giddings; the latter was the daughter of a pioneer

Texan killed by the Indians near San Antonio. She married J. N. Brown, President of the Alamo National Bank, and is the mother of Clinton Giddings Brown, Mayor of San Antonio. It is impossible to estimate the influence of one man on education and Presbyterianism in Texas, but when it is remembered that J. W. Miller was the first Presbyterian minister installed in Texas, and that over the church in Houston he preached often to such men as General Sam Houston; that he moved to Washington County and gave the gospel many times to lawgivers gathered in Old Washington, also the capital for a time; that he conducted for twenty-five years the first Presbyterian School for girls in Texas, with a patronage from all points in the State; that he was for the first twenty-five years of the original Board of Trustees of Austin College (twice elected its President also, but declined because of his own school); twice Moderator of the Synod of Texas, and by request preached the silver anniversary sermon for the Synod in 1876 at Dallas; many times a delegate to the General Assembly of his church,—all this gives but a faint idea of the church's appreciation of his intellect and labors for Presbyterianism. He was beloved far and wide, and counted such men as John H. Reagan his firm friends. His removal to Washington County seemed to give him renewed energy, and he was able to respond to many calls far and near to preach the gospel, christen the infants, marry the young, and bury the dead. His marriage ceremony was never perfunctory but embraced some appropriate poetry, and his burial services were never harrowing but always a comfort to the bereaved family. He believed that the dead had settled their own accounts with Heaven, and salvation for the living was the only thing to be accomplished. I fear that he had little faith in death-bed repentance, or as my brother calls it "Taking out Fire Insurance" just before death. He preached often that "Today is the day of Salvation." My father was never ascetic,—he loved to tell or listen to a good story and it did not have to be the daintiest, and if it included hell and damnation he put in the word. He was much interested in all farm work, and yearly took prizes at fairs on his fruits, honey, sheep and other animals. Hunting, fishing and "bee lining" were his greatest diversions and it was a poor day for sport if he did not get results for his efforts. He would hunt deer at night with a lan-

tern on his head, called fire-hunting and would do "still hunting" by day, but never hunted deer with hounds. The latter he considered unfair sport. He often told as a joke on himself about one fire-hunting trip when he shot at a pair of eyes reflecting his light, brought down the game and was horrified at finding the game to be a neighbor's old belled mare. He went early the next morning to pay the neighbor for the damage and was rejoiced to see the same animal with her head buried in the feed trough, and seemingly none the worse for the shooting. Both my father and mother were great lovers of children and always had time to devote to the young of their flock, cuddle the babies, and give goodies to the children of maturer years. He would take the babies on his lap and often put them to sleep to the tune of "Rock-a-bye Baby in the Tree Top" or "Bye Baby Bunting, Daddy's Gone a-Hunting." Still he did not allow the children to occupy the center of the stage and often admonished us with "children should be seen and not heard." He hated gossip and small talk and frequently called a halt upon our glib tongues with, "Talk about things and not persons." If he was not fearless we never knew it. Once when one of his pupils ran away from school and married a worthless fellow, the groom's family came armed to demand the bride's effects. He recognized with sadness that the false step could not be righted, so met the armed men open handed with the query, "Did you come with your guns to shoot tumble-bugs?" Again one of the pupils was detected as a thief, she was sent home from school in disgrace and father met the armed male members of the family at the gate and was so firm in his position that they were convinced of the wrong and gave up hope of ever having the girl reinstated. He was a chaplain to General T. N. Waul's "Texas Legion." He believed firmly in the motto "Be sure you're right, then go ahead." He was deliberate in all matters and hence avoided making many errors. He was always a friend of the old negroes of the community, kept benches for them at the rear of his church and gave them land for their Methodist and Baptist churches and graveyards. He often performed marriage ceremonies for the blacks, a source of great amusement to our family. The fee was usually \$1.00. They would be taken into the parlor, and one of my sisters would lend music's spell to the proceedings and the antics of the negroes

would furnish an hour of real pleasure to all of us. The tendency to general kissing of the bride and groom by all the attending blacks was a feature and the admonitions of my father would be eagerly attended. Once he preached to the negroes upon the text "Thou shalt not steal" and made the plea so vivid and punishment so certain that for days the negroes were very busy returning or confessing to small breaches of this commandment.

He was never a prohibitionist, but rather tended to the other side. Each fall he would make a barrel or more of mustang grape wine which was famous over Texas. This wine he dispensed from the cold stone milkhouse in pitchers to all the family and guests and sent bottles far and near for the sick and debilitated. He believed that dancing was fine exercise and tended to improve the female graces and make his pupils "polished after the similitude of a Pallas." So every Friday night the girls had a dance, which mother and father usually attended with any guests of the school. There were not men enough, so several of the girls would tie a handkerchief around their left arms and lead the dances. Sometimes they would have a costume dance and some of the girls would appear in their brothers' suits and even in some of my father's and thus add to the merriment. Usually the dance music was a piano played in turn by musicians, but sometimes a negro fiddler played, and often the girls played on their banjos, violins and guitars. Often at noon the girls would dance under the shade of the beautiful live oak trees to the piano played in the parlor. More interesting to me in childhood were a pair of beautiful twin girls, Rainey and Belle Bethany, who each played charmingly on an accordeon, and while they furnished dance music for the others, danced together to their own music. Another sweet memory of early childhood is of "Aunt Polly" Lipscomb, widow of Judge Abner Lipscomb, a first Justice of Texas' Supreme Court, when she was probably about eighty-two, wan, small, and bowed with age, seated at an old piano playing with great zest dance music for the girls. She was a veritable wraith, but a lady of great piety and a valued member of my father's church for years, still believing in the joys of youth. Her husband believed in immersion, so my father yielded to his request and "buried him in baptism"—the only time he ever departed from the prescribed Presbyterian method of sprinkling.

In his description of Washington County, DeCordova refers to its educational opportunities in the following words:

There are two literary institutions of high character in this county, viz: Live Oak Female Seminary, Gay Hill, Texas. This institution is in the country, remote from all the temptations of a village or city, healthy and beautiful in location, and surrounded by one of the best neighborhoods in the State. The location was chosen and fitted up by the Superintendent especially for a permanent female school.

The sixth year will commence the first Monday of February next.

Rev. J. W. Miller, Superintendent.

Mrs. R. K. Red, Principal.

Mr. Joiner, Teacher of Music, etc.

Mr. M. Gerard, Drawing, etc.

Terms: For board, lodging, washing, light and fuel, per month, \$12. Tuition, according to studies, \$2 to \$4. Drawing, painting and embroidery, extra, \$5.

Half of all sessional bills in advance, and the balance before the young lady is taken away. Strict compliance will secure the parties a deduction of 5 per cent., and non-compliance an addition of 10 per cent. upon the whole bill.

Baylor University

Is located at Independence, a beautiful and quiet village in Washington County, on the great stage road from Houston and San Augustine to the City of Austin. The citizens of Independence and the immediate vicinity are unsurpassed in the State for intelligence, and moral and religious worth. The refined society, splendid landscapes and beautiful live-oak groves all combine to make Independence an eligible point for a great literary institution."¹ The University was chartered in 1845 by the Republic of Texas.

Rev. Rufus C. Burleson, A. M., President and Professor of Moral and Intellectual Philosophy and the Spanish Language and Literature.

Dr. David R. Wallace, A. M., Professor of Natural Science, French Language and Literature.

Gilbert L. Morgan, A. B., Professor of Mathematics.

Stephen D. Rowe, A. B., Professor of Ancient Languages and Literature.

James L. Smith, Principal of the Preparatory Department.²

¹*Texas: Her Resources and Her Public Men.* Philadelphia, 1858, pp. 217, 218.

²*Ibid.*, 285.

Let me add here that there was always the warmest friendship between the two schools, the brothers went to Baylor while their sisters were students at Live Oak Seminary. In my childhood, Rev. Dr. Wm. Carey Crane, President of Baylor University, and Rev. Dr. J. H. Luther, President of Baylor Female College, preached often at the Baptist Church near our home and came time and again as honored guests in our house.

Of Walker County and Huntsville, De Cordova says:

Austin College [now at Sherman]. The prosperity of this college is looked forward to with much anxiety by the friends of education throughout the State. They have already erected, on a commanding eminence, a beautiful building, have obtained the services of able professors, laid the foundation of a good library, and procured chemical and philosophical apparatus, and placed the institution under the direction of an enlightened and efficient board of trustees, who appear determined to make it an ornament to the town and a credit to the State. The students number now over a hundred, and, from the high reputation that this college has deservedly obtained, there is no doubt that it will receive an increased patronage. . . .

Board of Trustees: Rev. Daniel Baker, D. D., Ex officio President, Rev. J. W. Miller, Rev. R. H. Byers, Hon. Sam Houston, Judge A. S. Lipscomb, James A. Baker, Esq., A. J. Burke, Esq. (afterwards Mayor of Houston).

Faculty of five in Academic Department. Hon. Royal T. Wheeler (a Supreme Court Judge) was chosen Professor of Law in this college in 1858.

The Austin College Quarterly in its semicentennial number of October, 1902, speaks thus of Rev. J. W. Miller, D. D.

Official Roster—Trustees 1850: Daniel Baker, J. W. Miller, G. C. Red, Henderson Yoakum, Sam Houston, Hugh Wilson, A. J. Burke, R. Smither, J. Branch, J. C. Smith, J. Hume.

Anent the establishment of Austin College the same says:

The next meeting of Presbytery was held at Washington (old capital) June 21, 1849. At this time action concerning a location at Goliad was rescinded, owing to its being so far West. A committee consisting of Daniel Baker, J. W. Miller and Blair was appointed to select a central location for a college. This committee reported to a called meeting held at Prospect Church [where the Miller Home now is] Oct. 13, 1849, recommending Huntsville. The report was adopted, a charter was drawn up, a board of trustees selected, and a principal teacher secured. When

the time came for the selection of a name, the name of Daniel Baker was suggested. He declined the honor and the name of Stephen F. Austin was chosen, the college became "Austin College." A committee consisting of Rev. J. W. Miller and Elders D. D. Atchison and S. D. C. Abbott was appointed to secure the legislature's approval of the charter. (They rode horseback to Austin to obtain this.) The charter was signed by Gov. Wood on the 22nd day of November, 1849. . . . Rev. J. W. Miller occupied a very prominent position among those who laid the foundation of the college.³ . . . Presbyterianism in Texas owes much to Dr. and Mrs. Miller and his co-laborers, Dr. and Mrs. Red, who for forty years conducted the only Presbyterian school for girls in the State. In 1857 Dr. Miller, of honored fame, was elected President, but did not see his way clear to accept on account of Live Oak Seminary. He was always a staunch supporter of the College, and one on whose advice Daniel Baker relied.

[Austin College conferred the Degree of Doctor of Divinity upon him in 1873.]

Rev. J. W. Miller was active in the organization of the Synod of Texas at Austin, October 30, 1851, and was the first Stated Clerk. He was elected Moderator at Huntsville, November 4, 1858, and at Dallas, November 1, 1876, the latter the silver anniversary of the Synod, when Dr. Miller preached the anniversary sermon.⁴

At the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Synod of Texas, in November, 1876, at Dallas, my father, then the only living minister of its charter members, preached the sermon, which is so filled with the history of Presbyterianism in Texas that it is here published in full.

"God requireth that which is past."

We are to sketch the rise and progress of Presbyterianism in Texas.

We must begin with Brazos Presbytery, the mother of Presbyteries and the synod. B. Chase of Natchez, W. L. McCalla, Jno. Breckenridge and others had early visited Texas, seen its wants

³Rev. Dr. Samuel A. King, Professor Emeritus of Theology in the Presbyterian Seminary at Austin, tells me that Daniel Baker was always considered the founder of Austin College and J. W. Miller the father of the college.

⁴This sermon contains an historical résumé of Presbyterianism in Texas, and is printed in full in the writer's volume, *A Family of Millers and Stewarts*, 16-18. The original manuscript is in the writer's possession.

and prospects. On suggestion of these brethren the Committee of Missions of the synod of Mississippi requested Revs. Hugh Wilson and W. C. Blair, former missionaries among the Choctaw Indians, to go to Texas. Promptly they responded to the call. Promised a support by the committee, Wilson started for the new field in 1838, Blair in 1840. On the way Wilson reached San Augustine and organized the first Presbyterian Church in Texas, May, 1838. The next year Wilson moved on to Washington County and organized the second Presbyterian Church, near Independence, now called Prospect.

About the same time W. Y. Allen and Jno. McCullough came into the Republic and organized churches at Houston, Galveston and Austin. P. H. Fullenwider had been in the State some time, as early as 1834. The General Assembly and the Synod of Mississippi directed these brethren to organize a Presbytery. April 3d, 1840, Hugh Wilson, Jno. McCullough and W. Y. Allen came together at Chriesman's Settlement Prospect Church. . . . A sermon was preached by Mr. Allen from Psalms, 122 chapter, 6th verse: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem." A paper reciting the history of the case, professing faith in the Holy Scriptures and solemn adoption of the Confession of Faith and form of government of the Presbyterian Church of the U. S. A. was signed by the ministers and Jno. McFarland, ruling elder. McCullough was then chosen moderator, and W. Y. Allen, clerk. Blair was not there. He had started in full time to ride from Victoria, alone, on horseback, but, detained by high waters, he finally appeared on the ground two weeks too late. Daniel Baker was there and preached the sermon in which he told the story of the "Devil's turning fisherman and catching sinners with a naked hook." Capt. Chriesman, Stephen F. Austin's surveyor, quits his swearing and as I am writing this, calls upon me to tell me of that sermon being blessed to his conversion. Baker was a corresponding member and welcomed by the little band.

The old log schoolhouse where the Presbytery met has disappeared, a neat Presbyterian Church is near its site and a prosperous (Live Oak) female seminary has there been in existence for 23 years. The mound is near, but its sides are covered with cotton and corn instead of wild flowers, then so thick and beautiful that McCullough said that he rolled over them then as a soft bed, with intense delight. Chriesman's Settlement was for many years a meeting place for the little band. Wilson lived there. He always had a beef or a fat mutton and it was surprising how many his log house could entertain. Laymen and their families came 20 and 30 miles to these meetings and stayed for days. A blanket was a bed, and a live oak was a shelter. Plain food was

abundant. Such meetings, too large for any house, with such preachers as Wilson and Baker, were often held under the trees and greatly blessed. But they did not suit manuscript sermons very well, for while getting along with the thirdly the fourthly might take wing in the wind.

With Presbytery organized, what was to be done with it? Should it make application to the Synod of Mississippi? Two of its members, Blair and Fullenwider, were of that Synod. Wilson and Blair were her missionaries, and depended for support of their large families upon their promised salaries. But the General Assembly had just then rent asunder. The Synod was too remote to attend it. It required weeks and a heavy purse to go to its meetings. Texas was still a Republic and foreign to the "old States." England and France had missionaries in Texas offering most advantageous terms if she would remain alone. So the Presbytery decided for the present to be independent. The result was that Blair and Wilson were cut off from their salaries from the day of such action. Wilson never complained, but it was hard. Six months passed before he knew that his salary was stopped. He had sold his road wagon for corn to feed his family, put the corn "in a crib with his jersey wagon on its side for shelter," and hired an Irishman to husk corn. The day was cold and a fire was kindled and left burning during the dinner hour. The crib, corn and wagon were burned. He must turn teacher and farmer or his family will starve. But preach he did, far and near. No Presbyterian minister deserves to be more gratefully remembered. Blair, too, toiled and suffered privations. Indians swept down the Guadalupe valley, Linnville was burned and Victoria menaced. The place could not be defended and was deserted. Mrs. Blair laid upon a green cowhide with a three-day old baby, was dragged three miles and escaped. The Presbytery resolved itself into a missionary society. Each minister agreed to pay annually \$10 into the treasury for missionary funds. Poor brethren! They never paid it, because they could not. Sometimes a letter lay in the postoffice for months because 45 cents was not on hand to pay the postage. The little Presbytery named itself Brazos from the river whose rich valley was in sight. It claimed a broad field, all over Texas, then more than 300,000 square miles. No wonder that it leaned to independence! After sitting five days doing an amount of business which fills 28 pages of its minutes, it adjourned to meet November 5th of the same year. Two ministers and one elder got there after riding a long journey on horseback. No quorum. The ministers adjourned to meet at Independence in December. Then and there the same members met and proceeded to adjourn to Chriesman's Settlement

for regular business. It received Rev. F. Rutherford as a member, but he went to a higher court before he took his seat. He had stepped upon a nail and died of lockjaw. No meeting then till December 13, 1843. Many attempts, but no quorum. It rained for eighteen months, and mud and swollen streams stopped long journeys. War with Indians and Mexico interfered with everything. In 1843, at the call of the Moderator, Wilson, McCullough and Elder McFarland met again at Prospect Church. No quorum. Blair arrives, assents to articles of organization, becomes a member and makes a quorum. Though a called meeting, they proceed to regular business. They were strict constitutionalists, but work must be done and no Synod would cashier them. W. Y. Allen is gone, but Blair and S. J. Henderson are now received and four ministers are on her roll, with seven churches and 100 communicants. April 4, 1844, Presbytery held its next meeting at Columbia. All of its members are present and a new one received, Rev. P. H. Fullenwider.

He had been, and long continued to be, a real ranger. No more punctual attendant upon Presbytery than he. His old horse and himself were equal to any emergency. Cold lunch, blanket, saddlebags and grass for his horse were all that he asked. All day he would jog on and at night would sleep where he could, under a tree or a roof. "Here," was his reply when his name was called. His heart was big and his wants were few. I saw him first in April, 1847, at his own home. I was yet "green from the States." After riding three days to Presbytery, Henderson, Paxton and myself reached his house, a log cabin in the woods. Brother Fullenwider was from home. I was anxious to know how three preachers were to find food and lodging in that little pen. Sitting, watching the sun going down till I could stand it no longer, I went to higher ground to see if any other house was near. I saw, coming up to me, a man without hat or coat, on a mustang, with a huge sack before him, full of unshucked corn. It was Fullenwider. Compliments passed. I asked where we were to stay. "Bless you! here, this corn is for horses and come, see what the neighbors have sent for you to eat." He led me to a little outhouse and pointed to the walls hung with plump, ball-spiced, nicely dressed wild turkeys and a large churn filled full of eggs. . . .

The church and the school must be in this young land. Thus, early in 1844, this Presbytery advised that each minister preach upon "Education," try to raise funds for a college and report progress at the next meeting.

They appointed a committee to draw up plans and a charter for a literary institution, to be located on the Guadalupe River or its tributaries. After licensing its first licentiate, J. D. Sharpe, it

adjourned to meet at Victoria, April, 1845. There and then I became a member. After regular business was done, and the Sabbath was over, Presbytery resolved itself into "a committee of the whole" to examine the beautiful valley of the river and fix the location of a colony and a college.

Time would fail to tell of the adventures of that moving Presbytery, its hopes and disappointments, till finally the original plan as to location in the west was given up in favor of Huntsville. I learned upon that trip how hard it could rain, and how creeks dry yesterday could today become swollen torrents of water, which you could neither cross nor see across. I learned why Blair was two weeks behind when Presbytery was organized. I experienced the convenience of a hog trough with puncheons lashed upon the sides so that you might have dry clothes when you swam, at midnight, a swollen stream an hundred yards wide, its waters cold, its alligators in motion and its mosquitoes like Egypt's darkness that could be felt! This was the last meeting of the independent Presbytery. Connection with Synod was sought and consummated that year. Annexation takes place with its joys and sorrows. The old minute book, that never went to Synod for review, closes its record with a statistical report of eight ministers, one licentiate, 12 churches and 200 communicants. Of these eight ministers, one now remains on earth, "a seared leaf," ready to fall. Thenceforth there is more rapid enlargement. War passes out of Texas, and ends with the humiliation of Mexico. Population and ministers come. Slow, but steady progress. Yet, till 1848, never more than five, oftener three, and oftener still no quorum, could be gotten together for a meeting.

At the fall meeting of 1847 occurred the first installation of J. W. Miller, pastor over the Church of Houston. Statistical report for 1848 shows 10 ministers, 12 churches and 335 members. At a called meeting at Washington, June, 1849, Baker, Miller and Blair were appointed a committee to examine the territory between the Brazos and Trinity Rivers for a college location. At another called meeting at Prospect Church the same year this committee reported recommending Huntsville. Their report was adopted, a charter drawn up, the institution named, a board of trustees elected and a principal teacher secured.

At the next spring meeting at Huntsville, April 4, 1850, the Board organized, chose a site for its buildings and sent forth its agent, Daniel Baker, D. D. Well he plied his mission. In a few years a fine building was completed, a 100 students matriculated, a full faculty employed, and chairs endowed. But it labored under what was to belong to all such institutions in Texas, a disposition to grow too rapidly. . . .

At the fall meeting of 1850 the Synod of Mississippi was petitioned to divide by the lines of the Trinity and the Colorado Rivers, the Presbytery into three bodies, and sent a special delegate to prosecute the object. This delegate, McCullough, the only one who ever went to that Synod, reported at the next meeting the Presbytery divided.

Thereupon a petition was made out to the General Assembly to erect a Synod, composed of the three Presbyteries—Brazos, Eastern Texas and Western Texas. The request was granted, and the Presbyteries met at Austin, October 30, 1851.

The following letters were found among my father's papers and are published here for the first time, as they show something of the lives of several of the founders of Presbyterianism in Texas, and illustrate phases of the early history of Austin College. It is known that Rev. Hugh Wilson organized the first Presbyterian Church near San Augustine in 1838 and the Prospect Church, over which Rev. J. W. Miller was pastor for thirty-eight years, was the second, organized by Wilson, in 1839.

Hugh Wilson to Miller

String Prairie March 4 1856

Dear Brother

In the holy providence of God I am called to the painful duty of informing you of the death of my *dear wife*. Sabbath morning she ate breakfast with us as usual. At nine o'clock she declined going to sabbath school saying that her throat was sore. During the afternoon and early part of the night she still made more complaint. At 10 o'clock we thought it best to send for a physician. Before 11 o'clock it seemed as if she would die immediately but we succeeded in affording her temporary relief. Dr. Christian got here at one o'clock but before he arrived the disease had resumed its raging verulence. About 4 o'clock Monday morning she was mercifully released from the most extreme suffering. She retained the exercise of reason till her last breath but from the nature of her disease she could have but little deliberate thought. Early in the night she said she could not live, I told her it was evident she could not without speedy relief but still we hoped a blister we had applied might afford relief. Under these circumstances she expressed unwavering confidence in her prospects of future happiness and even a wish if it was the will of God to die.

Yesterday our whole neighborhood and a number of persons from String Prairie were with us at the burial. We had three

ministerial brethren of the Methodist Church with us. Thus suddenly has terminated an intimacy of more than fifty years standing, for when a boy of twelve years old I loved her with my whole soul. To us none of all the changes of this eventful period, no nor all put together, have any importance compared with the consequences arising from this long and happy connection. I feel thankful that I am the remaining sufferer. I have often expressed to her and to others a desire that I might be allowed to bury her. Providence has granted me this request. Were it not for the promise as thy day is so shall thy strength be, which I have so often found verified in my experience I should feel that poor Mary and myself have a gloomy prospect. May we not expect a special interest in your prayers and in the prayers of the christian friends of your neighbourhood who knew and loved my dear departed wife.

Young King, who preached for us yesterday, requested permission to publish the death of Mrs. Wilson in the Methodist Paper. Of course I could not object to it. If our Brother at Houston still keeps up his paper he will think it unkind in me that I did not ask the favour of him. I will give you a few items which you may use or not as you think best and ask that you will make out a short notice of her death and forward it to him with a request that he will publish it, letting him know that I requested you to do so. I have a special reason for this last request. Mrs. Wilson was born in N. Carolina at the close of the year 1794. When about 14 years of age she was admitted to full communion in the Presbyterian Church. We were married and went to the Chickasaw mission in 1822, where we remained ten years. Went to Teire in 32 and left for this country with my family early in 38. With our movements in this country you are familiar. Of course she has been thrown into connection with a great many persons of every possible shade of character. You are well acquainted with the leading features in the character of my dear wife, and with the place she has occupied in the feelings of those who knew her best, in this country. I can truly say her position wherever we have lived has been no less favorable. I have never known one individual to dislike Mrs. Wilson, even for a short time, and although apparently defective in the art of winning favour, somehow, all who knew her loved her. But she has gone where she will be esteemed not for her natural amiableness but because by grace she has been made to bear the image of the Son of God.

Let me hear from you soon.

Yours

Hugh Wilson

Daniel Baker to Miller

Huntsville, 16th Dec. 1856.

Dear Brother Miller,

After a long absence, I reached home on the 4th inst. There is to be a meeting of the Board of Trustees, on the evening of the third Thursday in Jany. next. I hope you will be present. I greatly desire that you should be present at that time. We have some very important business to engage the attention of the trustees. I have much to say to you, but have not time, just now. Suffice it to say, that I have given notice that I purpose to tender my resignation as President of Austin College—to take effect at that time. Not on account of any abatement of personal interest in the affairs of our noble Institution, but chiefly because there is a fair prospect of getting a gentleman of high distinction to take my place. You wish to know the man. It is no less a person than Governor Swain of North Carolina—the present President of the University of that state. If he should receive a unanimous vote I think he will come—for I have seen him and conversed with him on the subject. Should he come—our College will take a wonderful spring. When he took charge of the University of North Carolina there were only ninety students—now there are about four hundred! Such a man would give a great name to Austin College—and I doubt not, he would bring many students from his own state. But I have not time to enlarge. Do, brother Miller, come—but if you absolutely cannot—be sure to appoint a *Proxy*—say Anthony Branch—or Col. Leigh.

Excuse the brevity of this note.

Yrs in a precious Savior

Dan'l Baker.

The results of my efforts during the present year—in every way about some six thousand dollars.

W. C. Somerville to Miller

Huntsville, Texas, June 25th 1857.

Rev. J. W. Miller,

Dear Sir Permit me to send you a letter of a single idea. This day you have been *unanimously* elected President of Austin College by the Bd. of Trustees.

The one idea is this. Come, Come, Come. Don't let anything keep you back. The College, if properly conducted, will become powerful for good generally in Texas, and particularly, its influence will be immense for Presbyterianism. Education and conservatism have always been chief weapons in our denomination. We can't shout like a Methodist bro. nor can we plunge so well as

the Bap. We must act through the intellect. Who then can wield a more powerful influence for good than the president of a College?

Do let me entreat you to *Come*, and be assured you will receive a cordial welcome from your bro.

Wm. C. Somerville.

Daniel Baker to Miller

Huntsville 27th June 1857.

Dear Brother Miller,

We have had a harmonious, delightful, and most important meeting of the Board of Trustees. Amongst other matters of special interest was your election as President with a salary of fifteen hundred dollars. As Chairman of the Committee appointed to notify you of your election, I have written the letter, and it will be mailed this day. But I thought that in addition to that official communication, I would drop you a line, in an *unofficial* way—that I might mention sundry things that might be interesting to you. And first: I am happy to inform you, that the College is in a highly prosperous condition, both in relation to its internal and external affairs. At our late annual convocation, we have had quite a flourish of trumpets! and a good impression was evidently made upon all classes of persons, those at home, and those from abroad! The students have returned to their homes, with feelings of enthusiasm, in favor of Austin College! Some think that they can bring two or three students back with them next September, at any rate, they mean to *try*. I am happy to inform you that the financial condition of the College is decidedly better than it ever was before! At the meeting of the Board, in January, it was determined that we would *strike for the endowment of one professorship*—on the old plan modified. In prosecution of my agency I entered upon this work with new zeal and hope, and at our meeting on the 24th inst. I reported something more than twenty-two thousand dollars secured! This not only answers for one endowment but leaves some seven thousand dollars to go towards a *Second* endowment!!! Is not this encouraging? But even this is not all. Besides *notes* obtained to the amount of twenty-two thousand dollars (fifteen thousand at 8 per cent interest—and seven thousand at ten per cent interest). Besides this—the agent has reported an addition to the resources of the College in *lands* to the amount of more than four thousand dollars. Of this Mr. McCormick has given a tract, on the San Bernard, for which he was offered fifteen hundred dollars but which he values at twenty-two hundred. Moreover Mr. Austin Bryan has

given a tract on the Buffaloe Bayou, near Houston, of 306 acres, which he values at eight hundred dollars. Thus, more has been done within the last six months, to add to the resources of Austin College than within any three years preceeding! Surely my brother, we have now, emphatically, much reason to thank God and take courage! I may here also mention, that should good crops be made the present season—there is a prospect of two additional endowments, the next year. I do think, brother Miller, that heaven is smiling upon our beloved Institution; and, I hope, that you may see your way clear to accept of your appointment, as the President of Austin College: and, God grant that under your administration the Institution may prosper yet more and more. Professor Thorn retains the chair of Mathematics—Salary \$1500—and Mr. McKnight has been elected to the Chair of Languages—Salary \$1300. With regard to Mr Somerville, he has been appointed Principal of the Preparatory Department, which is to be separate from the Collegiate Department, and he to have all the emoluments thereof. This arrangement seems to give general and great satisfaction. Our prospects are bright! It is true, we owe some four thousand dollars, chiefly to the Professors. We are on a bar—with deep water all around!—and, I think a plan has been adopted by which our Craft will be “sparred off,” within a few weeks from this time. I would like to write more but I have a wretched pen—and I am almost continually interrupted. In a few days, I am to visit Marshall, and operate in that region, as a minister of the Gospel, and Agent of the College. Shall probably go as far as Shrevesport—La.

I believe, I told you about Mr Smith, purchasing two thousand acres of the College land for \$5000—and Mr Sorley’s subsequent offer of \$15000—if Mr Smith would reconvey the land to the College. He has had the great magnanimity to do it! In consequence, the Trustees have voted two perpetual Scholarships to each party concerned—as a compliment— And as an additional compliment, directed that, upon the Records of the College, there should be an ornamented page with a “*Roll of the distinguished Patrons of Austin College*” upon which should be placed in gilt letters their names, and that of Rev. Benjamin C. Chase. This I think is a good idea—and I would like you to see what Mr. De Lone has sketched. With kind remembrances for all the members of your domestic circle

Yrs fraternally

Dan’l Baker.

P. S.—I have rec’ letters from several persons in the old States who would like to be engaged in some Female Institute. I think

should you come to Huntsville you could very easily get some one in your place at Independence.

The trustees by a unanimous vote conferred the degree of Doctor of Divinity upon the Rev. Hugh Wilson of our State—and have made a record of their determination to confer the degree of A. M. upon the members of the first graduating class.

R. H. Byers to Miller

New Danville July 3rd 1857

Rev J. W. Miller

Dear Bro You have doubtless heard already of the action of the Board of Trustees of Austin College, so far at least as your election to the Presidency. And as the proposition was mine I wish to lay before you, the grounds on which I acted. I had no patience with the notions of some men. The talk about great men, etc., it was too childish. I considered all efforts to get such men as vain, besides I am by no means sure they are the kind of men for our Institution. In my judgment what we want for President is a man, acquainted with our people, with their character, habits, modes, etc. A man fully aware of the *status* of our College in all things, whose heart is enlisted, and who will take hold, with his eyes open, fully posted in the nature of the work he will have to perform, and with the determination to do it. Of scholarship sufficient to guarantee that by application he could soon make himself all that would be needful. A man of gentleness, yet of firmness and perseverance. And last but not least he must be—in a large sense a Texan. I consider this as almost indispensable, to the Judicious Administration of the government of the College. In view of these premises, after the resignation of Dr. Baker, my mind turned to you and after mature and prayerful consideration, under all the circumstances, and after making inquiry amongst leading business men in Houston and elsewhere, and hearing all that was to be said in the Board for others, my mind was but the more confirmed. I proposed your name in the Board, and it was unanimously and heartily responded too. And so far as I heard outside, there was but one sentiment—it *was a wise, a good choice* leading Business Men at Houston assured me it would give new character and influence to the *College*. These my Bro. are the leading points of thought which governed me in my action. I am not insensible to the sacrifices you will have to make, in accepting. But experience has taught me that by far the largest share of these sacrifices, consists in the surroundings which we gather about any given matter, in our own minds. The sacrifice can only at most include those things which you must soon or later give up. Your salary as President will support you.

And I think you may calculate on getting it. I do hope you will find it duty to accept. In my mind there is no other such field of usefulness in our state. Then let me say a word (*in the strictest confidence*). We must have a more positive religious influence at our College. I do not mean to find fault with the Brethren there I love all of them and have confidence in them, and yet I do feel that their religious character and influence on the College is negative, Christianity must be positive and aggressive, or it is nothing. Our Lord said "I have come to send fire upon the earth," and our religion like fire must be aggressive, ready to take hold upon all that comes near enough. If our College goes on a while thus, I consider it as a failure, so far as its Presbyterianism is concerned. As the foundations—so will the superstructure be. We want a man who will dig deep and lay good foundations, that our College may be a source of sure support hereafter for our church.

I have said thus much, that you may see and know, that you are not chosen as a last resort but as the first, and so far as I am concerned at present the only choice, these are some of the reasons I assigned, in the Board, and I believe they were felt and fully responded to. I might urge many other reasons, but I am pressed for time.

And now my Bro let me urge, that in this matter you draw up all the facts, bring them clearly before your mind, make it a matter of earnest prayer ask counsel and direction of God for He alone can and will give it *right*. I would not have you to act against clear convictions of duty. But I would have you be very sure of the matter—before you refuse.

I think too of the work you may do for the church, that shall grow making glad our Zion, when you and I have ceased to labor here.

Think you the Pioneers of our church in that land from which you and I hail, could have done so much for our church in any or all other ways, as in the establishment of Jefferson College, it was through this they strengthened the stakes and lengthened the cords of our *Zion*. May God direct you for the good of our Zion, and the glory of *His name*. I have not time to look over this, you must excuse imperfections, my heart's desire is to hear from you and that you accept.

Give my kind regards to Mrs. Miller. Tell her she has no advantage in Kind feelings—and my esteem was won by her truthfulness to woman's true character of gentleness and affection, others may think as they please this, to me, is, in woman a priceless Treasure, without it—I think of her pretty much as I do of

the balance of mankind. You have doubtless heard that I go to Houston, *in September*.

May God bless and preserve you and yours and direct you in all things.

Yours fraternally

R. H. Byers.

S. McKinney to Miller

La. Institute New River July 23rd 1857

Rev and dear Brother.

I have just had the pleasure of hearing a letter read from you to Mr Thompson, informing us of your election to the Presidency of Austin College, etc. I do not know that I have anything to communicate, that would be new or valuable, that induces me to write, but to express my hope that you will accept the office, and that under your administration it may prove what we all desired and prayed,—a useful nursery for rearing valuable men both for church and state. I might add that it is a pleasant task to renew and perpetuate the recollection of our happy intercourse and friendships while in Texas.

At the last meeting of the Board at which I acted, I acting as Dr Red's proxy, nominated you, but as the whole matter was arranged as to a successor months previously, my vote was the only one dissenting.

I left the College and Funds in a healthy state, how they have been managed since I have not been advised. You are doubtless acquainted with these things much better than I am, being a member of the Board all the time.

You speak of difficulty of finding a suitable person to carry on your school, in case you should leave. What are the prospects for permanent success? If you should sell or rent your homestead what would be the different estimates? I am acquainted perhaps with some brother that could occupy the position successfully.

I shall be pleased to hear from you. I have expected to go to Texas to see after some interests I have there, this vacation, but find it difficult to get away from home. If I go I shall hope to see you.

With affectionate regard Your Bro. in Christ

Saml McKinney

Daniel Baker to Miller

Austin 23rd Nov. 1857

Dear Brother Miller

We had a very interesting meeting of the Synod: but, we did wish *you* were there! The New School Presbytery, was, by a

unanimous vote, received, *prospectively*, and the members annexed to the presbyteries within whose bounds they were. *Prospectively!* you say, what is the meaning of that? Why, it is this; If the General Assembly of our Church, and the United Synod to meet at Knoxville next Spring, should form a union—then, this arrangement will stand—if otherwise, then it becomes a nullity, and if afterwards, our New School brethren, of this state, wish to join us—they must come in “one by one, and two by Couples.” Our meeting at Palestine was very harmonious—very delightful! The report touching the College gave great satisfaction. The *Internal* condition as good as it ever was—And the *Financial* condition much better than was expected. The property of the College, valued at \$62,000—Debt, 1st July last about \$4,000—chiefly due to teachers. Some 17,000 acres of land in all donated to the College—of this, about 6000 acres have been sold for something like \$19,000. Since the first of January last—I have received for the Endowment, by subscriptions, and sale of land, in *notes*, to the amount of \$25,890. (This is included in the estimate of the property of the College.) The affair of Smith relinquishing the land which had been sold to him for \$5000—when Sorley offered for it \$15,000 was magnanimous, and I suppose you know, that the Trustees, as a compliment, voted to each of the parties, two Perpetual Scholarships—to be handsomely prepared on parchment—and also voted that their names, together with the name of the Rev. Benjamin Chase, should be written, in *letters of gold*, upon an ornamented page of the Records of the Institution!

You recollect, my brother, you were one of the subscribers to the endowment—the subscription \$200—to be paid *on*, or *before*, or *after*, the 1st Jany. 1861. The *interest to be paid at the close of each year*. As we have given *our* notes with appropriate Coupons—I have sent you the printed forms, which I hope you will have the goodness to sign, and forward to me, by mail to Wheelock, where I expect to be in about two weeks from this time. I have also enclosed another blank note which I hope you will get Doctor Red to sign—and, if Mrs. Lipscomb will see good to patronise the Endowment Scheme—please let me know and I will, with pleasure, attend to the matter, and that without delay. Heaven seems to be smiling upon our College. And now is the time for all its friends to do for it what they can. I am happy to say that our prospects for obtaining Legislative aid, are better now than they ever were before! Our new trustees are Col. Murray, Doctor Lawrence, Col. A. M. Branch and our good brother Fullenwider—yes, and also our good brother James Wilson, of Wheelock. Mr Atcheson, Doctor Branch, and Mr. McGregor have been left out. I did wish to pass through Independence, on my way home but,

I believe I must go around by the way of Wheelock and Lexington. The idea has been suggested of my going to London and Edenburg next Summer!!!! It may prove a bright idea, or, it may not! I mention the thing, in time, that the trustees may think upon the matter before the period arrives.

My son William has been very *very* sick! but, God be thanked, is now convalescent. You were appointed to preach the dedication sermon for our new and very beautiful church, in Huntsville, on the 3rd Sat. in Nov. but the whole affair has been postponed—until the debt has been fully paid. The building has cost us about \$4,000. Our subscriptions were about that amount—but, some three or four hundred dollars of it have not been collected, and by reason of the hardness of the times, etc., I suppose never will. The church is really a beautiful one! one of the chief ornaments of our town!

With christian Salutations Yr brother in Christ

Dan'l Baker.

Mrs. Twichell has most generously made a donation of her late husband's library to our College—with the cases which contain the books. This donation is a very valuable one.

Do get *all* the blanks signed, and forwarded to me at Wheelock; or Huntsville—and I will give you one of my best Texas bows!

R. H. Byers to Miller

Houston Texas Dec 30th 1857

Rev J. W. Miller

Dear Bro—I have had no further information, that is reliable, since your letter regarding the Presidency of our College. I still hope the way may be opened up for you to accept Is there any prospect? The matter must be determined shortly—at least in the course of the present session. If you cannot accept Who can you fix upon—that we can get? And I need not say to you that one of the first considerations—is that he shall be a man calculated to exercise a possitive, religious influence in the institution. Without this we cannot expect our College to become a school of the Prophets. Dr Bakers death—I fear will be a great loss to the College. I am utterly at a loss to know who to put in his place. And yet I think it very important that we should have an Agent immediately—for unless we can secure endowments—we will allways be in difficulties. Dr Baker has heretofore taken the lead in the matters of the College generally. I do not know who is to take his place, we must try and get a President, by the next session if possible. I have been trying to fix my mind on some one in case you refused the office And I have been told that you

have If so I have no doubt it was for wise and good reasons—although I am constrained to think you could have done more for the Redeemers kingdom in that office—than where you are. Still I know, one cannot decide for another Let me hear from you soon.

I have heard that you have a good degree of religious interest, both in School and Church I hope you may be greatly refreshed, and your hands strengthened.

I sometimes hope we have some tokens of a better state of things in our Church. There is I think—a deepening sense of the want of spirituality And I trust there is a melting of some of the hardness that has existed. I try to deal faithfully with my Session—we meet often— And I think there is getting to be an interest in our meetings.

The Church is filling up—the attendance is good. It is a little remarkable the increase in my congregation is nearly all gentlemen. So far as I can see but few ladies.

My Dear Bro pray for us. This was your first love in Texas. You know us, and our needs; pray that the Gospel may have free course.

Tomorrow is New years day. May God give you and yours a happy new year. Yours fraternally

R. H. Byers